

OBITUARY NOTICE

Professor J. RALPH AUDY

1914 - 1974

The report of the death of Professor J. Ralph Audy in San Francisco on March 1974 brought sorrow to his colleagues and friends in Malaysia, including many who are members of the Malaysian Medical Association. At the time of his death Professor Audy was Director of the George Williams Hooper Foundation and Chairman of the Department of International Health in the School of Medicine of the University of California, San Francisco. He was also Director of the University of California International Center for Medical Research (UC ICMR), a programme that has supported more than 70 scientists over the years since 1960 in collaborative research at the Institute for Medical Research in Kuala Lumpur, and in the Faculties of Medicine of the University of Malaya and University of Singapore.

Professor Audy was born on December 24th, 1914 in Lancashire, England and spent nine years of his boyhood in Poona, India. He received his M.B.B.S. degree in 1939 from Guy's Hospital Medical School, London, and his Ph.D. and M.D. degrees in 1951 and 1971 respectively from the University of London. In the later stages of World War II while in the Royal Army Medical Corps he served as head of the Scrub Typhus Research Laboratory at Imphal, on the Indo-Burma border. Following the war, from 1947 to 1950 he headed the British Colonial Office Scrub Typhus Research Unit and from 1951 to 1959 the Division of Medical Zoology and Virus Research in the Institute for Medical Research, Kuala Lumpur. With his wife Kay and daughter Helen (whose birthplace was Kuala Lumpur) Professor Audy moved to San Francisco in 1959 to take up his new faculty appointment in the University of California. Thereafter he retained strong ties with those engaged in medical research and education in Malaysia, especially through his successful efforts to create and develop the UC ICMR programme.

Professor Audy's early research work in the epidemiology and medical ecology of scrub typhus led him also into pioneering studies in a new discipline, now known as medical geography. His contributions to the science of parasitology, and particularly to medical acarology, were also immense. His interests in medical ecology, medical geography, and parasitology were to continue throughout his career and to lead him, in his later years, into highly original exploration and synthesis in the emerging field of human ecology. Throughout his research years Professor Audy remained a profound humanist and an exciting and concerned medical educator. During his career he held many distinguished appointments and received many honours, including in 1959 the Chalmers Memorial Medal of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. He felt deeply the honour afforded him in 1971 by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the Institute for Medical Research, in appreciation of his years of service and support of the Institute and its programmes. His visit to Malaysia on that happy occasion was to be his last.

Professor Audy is no longer with us, but the power of his imagination and the stimulus of his scientific and philosophical thought will long continue as a beneficent influence on those who follow him — including so many of us here in Malaysia.

F.L.D.